



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



Metropolitan Chicago Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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January 22, 2016

To the pastors and congregations of the

Metropolitan Chicago Synod, the
Northern Illinois Synod, and the
Central/Southern Illinois Synod:

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

As you may know by now, Lutheran Social Services of Illinois (LSSI) has announced a very significant reduction in both its workforce and its program portfolio for the delivery of essential human services to the people of Illinois. The cuts will eliminate 758 jobs, and a number of ministry programs, including those that serve senior adults, prisoner and family ministries, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, and community counseling services.

The announcement issued directly by LSSI does an excellent job of describing the nature of these reductions and the reasons for them. As your bishops, however, we felt it necessary to address you from a pastoral perspective and to emphasize several important points.

To begin, we can reassure you, as members of the LSSI board, that the process of evaluation, planning, praying and listening, though painful, was extraordinarily careful, considerate, and responsible. As with many expressions of the common good in Illinois, we have been placed in an untenable position by the paralysis of state government. Our Christian faith commitment to providing the highest quality of care to the state's neediest citizens at the lowest possible cost also makes us vulnerable and highly dependent upon the reliability of our partners in civic leadership. That reliability has failed. We are owed more than \$6 million by the state for services already delivered, with no foreseeable prospect of prompt reimbursement. We have exhausted all credit options available to us to sustain our ministries. The costs of these programs far exceed our current donative capacity to absorb the losses and continue the work. And even with frugal and expert stewardship, the financial margins in providing these services are far too thin to sustain us over long periods of uncertainty and non-payment. To continue without adjustment would threaten the security and well-being of all our employees, and might ultimately endanger the future of all our ministries.

Secondly, we want to emphasize our continued confidence and commitment with respect to the mission that remains strong—providing mental health services, affordable senior housing, services for at-risk families, residential support for adults with developmental disabilities, foster care, home care, and programs that help children maintain connections with incarcerated parents.

These services continue to be exemplary expressions of our common call to serve our neighbor in need, in Christ's name and on Christ's behalf.

Finally we encourage everyone to work and to pray in response to these developments. We ask you to work in your local communities and in the general society for justice, for responsible and compassionate government, and for fair and universal access to health and opportunity. And we ask you to pray, now, for the dedicated staff of LSSI who are losing their jobs, for courage and joy among those who continue to work, for wisdom among the board and the executive staff entrusted with the stewardship of this mission, for clarity and courage among our political leaders caught in the deadlock of the state's financial crisis, and above all we ask you to pray for consolation and hope among the thousands upon thousands of children, families, vulnerable and invisible individuals who will be deeply affected by these changes.

It is a hard time for us. But we continue, as we always have, with complete confidence in the promise that God's grace is sufficient for us, and that we will be restored and lifted up again to share Christ's abundant love with even greater joy.

In Christ,



Bishop S. John Roth
Central Southern Illinois Synod



Bishop Gary Wollersheim
Northern Illinois Synod



Bishop Wayne N. Miller
Metropolitan Chicago Synod